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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

First regular session of 1994

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 23 February 1994, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. GRANT
(Executive Director)

Chairman: Miss MAKINDA (United Republic of Tanzania)

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Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Rebadavia, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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Implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 on further measures for restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, including future working methods of the Executive Board

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN declared open the first regular session of 1994 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Statement by the Executive Director

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN, speaking in his capacity as the Executive Director, said that the UNICEF secretariat wholeheartedly welcomed General Assembly resolution 48/162 and believed that the implementation of that and other relevant resolutions should facilitate the Fund's operational effectiveness. It also welcomed the commitment to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council and the Council's new role vis-à-vis the Executive Board, as well as the various measures that had been taken to ensure greater coherence in policy formulation and system-wide goal-setting.

3. The Fund's greatest strength lay in the grand alliance for children, a movement that brought together Governments and civic society, leaders and ordinary people around the globe. The effective participation of non-member States, the National Committees, non-governmental organizations and other strategic partners in the growing movement for children was critical to the Fund's future.

4. The Board's effectiveness would depend on the substantive participation of its members from the industrialized and the developing countries. Nothing could substitute for the active, informed, critical and engaged participation of North and South.

5. In listing the functions of the Executive Board, General Assembly resolution 48/162 encouraged the taking of "new programme initiatives". The Board welcomed that approach, since openness to change and renewal was part of what made UNICEF a good development partner. At the same time, UNICEF owed its success to its persistence and to making sure that it worked in as many places and for as many communities as possible. The Fund should change where change was needed, but it should also be allowed to continue to do what worked.

6. The Board had on its agenda three important programme-related items, as well as the management study proposal. The first such item was his recommendation that the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award should be granted to the All-China Women's Federation (E/ICEF/1994/P/L.1). The second item was the Emergency Programme Fund. It was necessary to increase the planning level of the Fund from $14 million to $30 million for the 1994-1995 biennium; that would enable UNICEF to respond to emergencies more efficiently, rapidly and flexibly.

7. The third item concerned the new arrangements for inter-agency action on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). UNICEF was working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

(The Temporary Chairman)

and the World Health Organization (WHO) on the establishment of a joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS. The Fund was participating actively in those discussions and was currently chairing the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on AIDS within the United Nations system.

8. The Board should approve the revised proposal for the administrative and management review of UNICEF, which had been mandated by the Executive Board (E/ICEF/1994/AB/L.1). The new proposal incorporated the valuable comments made at the Board's regular session of 1993, and also took into account the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields, as well as the follow-up to the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF.

9. Over the past 10 months, the number of countries that had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child had increased from 135 to 155. There had been encouraging action towards the achievement of the Fund's mid-decade goals, and their achievement by December 1995 would mean that 2 million fewer children would die in 1996 than had died in 1992, and that the leading causes of blindness and mental retardation among children would have been virtually eliminated. It was heartening that, slowly but significantly, scores of Governments were moving from a policy of low priority for their vulnerable children towards a policy of "children first".

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

10. Mr. POST (Netherlands) nominated Miss Makinda (United Republic of Tanzania) for the office of Chairman.

11. Miss ARIAS (Colombia) seconded the nomination.

12. Miss Makinda (United Republic of Tanzania) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

13. Miss Makinda (United Republic of Tanzania) took the Chair.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that the coordinators of the respective regional groups had put forward the following candidates for Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Makkawi (Lebanon) for the Group of Asian States; Mr. Costa, Filho (Brazil) for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; and Mr. Post (Netherlands) for the Group of Western European and other States.

15. Mr. Makkawi (Lebanon), Mr. Costa, Filho (Brazil) and Mr. Post (Netherlands) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

16. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since the members of the Group of Central and Eastern European States had not yet chosen their candidate for Vice-Chairman, the Board should come back to the item later in the session.

17. It was so decided.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that, at its current session, the Board would begin to consider how best to implement General Assembly resolution 48/162. The new Board comprised 36 members instead of 41, and some of the articles of its rules of procedure would have to be modified in order to reflect the new situation.

19. At its current session, the Board would consider reports by the Executive Director on the revised proposal for an administrative and management review of UNICEF (E/ICEF/1994/AB/L.1), the Emergency Programme Fund (E/ICEF/1994/P/L.2) and the recommendation for the Maurice Pate Award (E/ICEF/1994/P/L.1). She hoped that the Board would reach positive decisions on those and other programme issues, without any unwelcome fallout from the ongoing process of restructuring of the Organization.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

20. The agenda was adopted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 48/162 ON FURTHER MEASURES FOR RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS, INCLUDING FUTURE WORKING METHODS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

ISSUES AND AGENDA(S) FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE SESSION(S)

21. The CHAIRMAN invited the Board to consider the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 and the future working methods of the Executive Board, which was perhaps the most important item on the agenda, together with issues and agendas for consideration at future sessions. She drew attention in that connection to the provisional agenda as contained in document E/ICEF/1994/L.1, which provided a helpful listing of issues requiring decisions by the Board by April-May, issues that required approval by the Board but could be addressed later in the year, and reports and issues that would need only to be reviewed and/or noted during 1994.

22. Among the issues to be addressed were: the division of work between the annual and regular sessions; the dates of the additional sessions to be held in 1994; the question of documentation; the question of the continuation, abolition or modification of the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance or, as an alternative, the adoption of ad hoc structures and working groups that might meet between sessions; the types of debates to be held by the Board; the question of the construction of conference facilities at the headquarters of UNICEF for meetings of the Board; the issue of languages and the continuation or discontinuation of summary records; and the role and participation of observers in the meetings and proceedings of the Board.

23. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that the secretariat had circulated, for consideration by the Board, a proposed calendar of meetings for the remainder of 1994 and part of 1995, in accordance with resolution 48/162. The resolution provided for an annual session and for regular meetings - which it would be more appropriate to call "regular sessions". As there would be more frequent regular sessions of the Board, the annual session could be of one week's duration instead of two as at present.

(Mr. Chowdhury)

24. He suggested that, in addition to the regular session in February (which from 1995 onwards could be held in January) and the annual session at the end of April, two more regular sessions might be held in May and September. That time-frame took into account the schedules of the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the sessions of UNDP. The guidance of the Board on that matter was requested.

25. The secretariat would also need the guidance of the Board as to the procedures for, and timing of, the approval of the UNICEF country programme recommendations, bearing in mind the time required for consultations with Governments after approval by the Board. It would be helpful to have a timetable whereby the country programmes were approved by May of each year.

26. The secretariat would welcome guidance on the proposed allocation of agenda items for the sessions of the Board in 1994. In that connection, it was felt that the major policy papers - the Executive Director's report and the progress report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children - could be taken up at the annual sessions, and perhaps also the Greeting Card Operations (GCO) work plan and proposed budget. At the annual session in 1994, the medium-term plan for 1994-1997, the UNICEF policy paper on women and the triennial document on the International Child Development Centre could also be considered.

27. Other matters on which the secretariat wished to have guidance from the Board were the committee structure of UNICEF, the role and composition of the Bureau of the Board, the functional implementation of the provisions of resolution 48/162 concerning the participation of observers at the annual and regular sessions, and the language services for documentation and simultaneous interpretation required for the annual and regular sessions. In view of the greater frequency of the Board's sessions, it might be necessary to waive the six-weeks rule for documentation and to reduce the length and number of documents requested by the Board for each session.

28. Another matter that called for particular attention by the Board was the amendment of its rules of procedure necessitated by the implementation of resolution 48/162. That resolution also called for the development of improved modalities for regular informal briefings for all member States of the respective funds and programmes. Such briefings could be held prior to a session of the Board, and also at the conclusion of the session to report on the outcome.

29. The resolution required the Board to submit an annual report to the Economic and Social Council. That requirement might be accommodated by submitting the report of the annual session as at present but with some modification, although it might be necessary to prepare separate reports for each session and to submit a consolidated version for submission to the Council. The secretariat required the guidance and suggestions of the Board on that matter.

30. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said that the present session of the Executive Board was the first one that had been held since it had been restructured in accordance with resolution 48/162. A great deal of time had been spent on achieving consensus on the resolution, and it would be useful to bear in mind constantly at the present session the objectives of the restructuring so as to promote the goals intended and avoid the pitfalls of the past. His delegation welcomed the suggestions made by the secretariat. It was in favour of more frequent but shorter operational meetings, rather than the single annual session that had been held in the past. It was also in favour of simplified records of decisions rather than lengthy resolutions. He suggested that, at the close of the session, it might be useful to convene an informal consultation to assess the outcome and measure it against the objectives set by the resolution. That would be a way of ensuring that the effort spent on finalizing the reform package had been worth while and was producing optimum results for all member States.

31. Miss ARIAS (Colombia) referred to the explanation by the Colombian delegation when resolution 48/162 had been adopted. The delegation had put forward a number of points on that occasion concerning its understanding of the restructuring process.

32. In the first place, sessions of the Executive Board were considered to mean substantive meetings at which decisions were taken relating to the objectives set forth in that resolution. The resolution should be taken as a mandate whereby the funds and programmes at the local level would make available the facilities to enable the Board to meet at headquarters with full facilities being provided, including facilities for the use of the official languages. The presence of observers at sessions of the Board was a sovereign right, and such observers should be able to contribute to the discussion when they declared an interest in the subject-matter. Finally, one essential point made in the resolution was that the decision-making process would remain unchanged.

33. Her delegation was prepared to participate in the process of adapting the working methods of the Board on the basis of those principles. It would be necessary to display flexibility and a willingness to adjust. A start could be made at the present session, and she suggested that the process should be continued at a session to be held in April/May.

34. Mr. POST (Netherlands) said that his delegation fully supported the objectives of resolution 48/162, which had been adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. The secretariat had identified a number of issues, and he suggested that they should be taken one at a time, beginning, for example, with the question of the use of languages. When that debate had been finalized, the discussion should turn to the functions of the Bureau. His delegation felt that would be a better way of proceeding than to treat concurrently all the many subjects that had been raised.

35. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) agreed with the delegation of the Netherlands that it would be preferable to take the items for discussion one by one. She suggested that the issues that could be disposed of easily might be taken first. The discussion of the dates of the meetings might be held over until after the issues for future discussion had been identified. The first subjects to be

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considered might be documentation, the use of languages, the role of the Bureau and the venue of meetings. The broader issues of the topics to be discussed in 1994, the dates of meetings and the role of observers might be discussed later.

36. Mr. OSVALD (Sweden) agreed with what had been said by the representatives of Canada and the Netherlands. On a more general level, he said that resolution 48/162 was designed to strengthen the position of the Executive Board in the decision-making process. It was necessary to devise new ways of working in order to achieve that. It was important for the Board to concentrate on operational matters to the exclusion of day-to-day management or political considerations. The regular sessions should be held at regular intervals, thereby ensuring the continuity that was especially important as a means of facilitating a dialogue between members of the Board and the Administration. He also felt that there should be less formal work in the Board and more informal dialogue both among the member States and between the member States and the Administration. Documents should be shorter, problem-oriented and geared to decision-making. The agenda of the annual session should include items of a general nature so as to facilitate participation by all the agencies and member States involved. At the present session, it was important to resolve the broad issues before entering into questions of detail, such as the need to amend the rules of procedure.

37. Mr. CRAPATUREANU (Romania) said that he was in favour of the step-by-step approach suggested by the representative of the Netherlands. He felt that it was important to consider the dates of meetings first, and he drew attention, in that connection, to the proposal by the secretariat that the third regular session should be held from 21 to 23 September 1994. He pointed out that the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly was scheduled to begin on 20 September and suggested that the third regular session might be moved to the second week of that month, thereby considerably easing the problems of small delegations, which sometimes found it difficult to attend concurrent meetings.

38. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that the secretariat had tried to find dates which did not conflict with the General Assembly, but it appeared that the only possible dates were from 21 to 23 September. He pointed out that the General Committee would be meeting at that time and that the general debate, which required the attendance of high-level delegations, would not begin until the following week. It had unfortunately not been possible to schedule the third regular session before the opening of the General Assembly.

39. Mr. CRAPATUREANU (Romania), while accepting the force of that argument, said that it would considerably ease the problems of small delegations if the meeting could be scheduled for the second or even the first week of September.

40. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said he agreed with the remarks made by the representative of Romania and hoped that it would be possible to schedule the third regular session of the Board at least a day or two earlier, to avoid a clash with the General Assembly. He also drew attention to the proposed dates for the annual session (25 to 29 April 1994) and the second regular session (2 to 4 May), and suggested that a date in mid-May or towards the end of the month might be preferable to holding the two sessions so close together.

41. Mr. CHRISTENSEN (Denmark) endorsed the suggestion by the representatives of the Netherlands and Canada that it would be preferable to discuss the substance of the issues before discussing the scheduling of meetings, and also that the simple issues should be disposed of first.

42. The CHAIRMAN, agreeing with that suggestion, reminded the Board that the secretariat had requested the Board's guidance regarding the committee structure.

43. Mr. NEUMANN (Germany) said that the original idea of resolution 48/162 had been that the smaller Executive Board should have more frequent meetings. Concerning programme matters, due account should be taken of the fact that high-level participation from developing countries when their country programmes were under consideration might be useful. It might be better to deal with those programmes in the regular Board meetings than in a smaller committee structure. On budget and financial matters, instead of establishing a standing committee, the Board might appoint rapporteurs to investigate very specific matters and report back to it, so that the entire membership of the Board could then deal with those matters.

44. Mr. HJELMAKER (Sweden) said he agreed that the Board itself should, as much as possible, assume responsibility for specific issues. While the Board could always set up ad hoc committees or groups on such issues, there was no need for any standing committees.

45. Mrs. MATHURIN MAIR (Jamaica) said that the Board should have the responsibility for programming as well as for administrative and financial decisions. It should seriously consider the establishment, on an ad hoc basis, of small groups to address specific programme issues or specific administrative and financial issues.

46. Mrs. SINGH (India) said that she was against the establishment of ad hoc groups in general. However, under certain circumstances and in view of the fact that the Board was in transition, she would not be averse to such an arrangement on an "as needed" basis. She did not see a continuing role for the previous format of committees.

47. Mr. COSTA, Filho (Brazil) said that since the Board was going to have more regular meetings throughout the year, the two committees should be abolished. While the establishment of ad hoc groups would militate against transparency and wide participation, he would not be averse to the establishment of committees in certain cases where they might help the Board. On the question of expertise developed by delegates as members of the two committees, the UNDP idea of having one regular session devoted primarily to programme issues and another focusing on administrative and budgetary matters could be a means of enhancing such expertise.

48. Mr. TISSOT (United Kingdom) said that he agreed with the views expressed by the representatives of Germany and Sweden on the role of the restructured Executive Board. There was a need to adopt a flexible machinery to establish committees or working groups when necessary. It would be pre-emptive, as things

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stood now, to identify the task that would be entrusted to such committees or working groups.

49. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that she agreed with the statement made by the representative of Brazil. As the Board was in a transitional year, it would have to adjust its needs in the light of experience.

50. Mr. IM (Republic of Korea) said that the Board should decide on the frequency of sessions. It should be allowed some flexibility to utilize ad hoc groups particularly at the initial stage.

51. The CHAIRMAN said there appeared to be a consensus that the old system of permanent committees should be abolished, that the Board itself should carry out its duties and that it could set up ad hoc mechanisms when necessary on specific issues.

52. Mr. KABIR (Observer for Bangladesh) said that in view of the changed situation, it was no longer necessary to have the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance. However, ad hoc committees could be established as needed. In that regard, he supported the view that in order to benefit from expertise, the secretariat might consider organizing one regular session devoted to programme issues and another devoted to financial and administrative matters.

53. Mr. ABIBI (Congo) expressed surprise at the fact that the issue of the abolition of the former committee structure was already being discussed; he had expected it to be taken up in the context of the discussions on the rules of procedure.

54. The CHAIRMAN said that the two issues were complementary. After the Board decided the future of the committees, it would, in its discussion of the rules of procedure, decide whether to amend the rules accordingly.

55. Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) said that while his delegation was not against the abolition of the committees, any decision in that regard should be made in the light of the needs of the Executive Board. Normally, his delegation was against the idea of ad hoc working groups and hoped that in future the Board would settle questions through meetings of the whole, which would ensure transparency.

56. Mr. KELLOWAY (Australia) said that his delegation was joining the consensus that had emerged on the issue. The secretariat should look carefully at the matter of timing, because there was a long lead time for the preparation of country programmes. Abolition of the committees would mean that additional effort would be required on the part of the secretariat to help members of the Board to manage that process so that they would not end up with too many programme matters at any one particular session.

57. Ms. FEOKTISTOVA (Russian Federation) said that the Executive Board needed to be flexible in its work especially during the first year of reform. Since there would be a comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 48/162 in 1995, there might be a need to introduce some corrections on the basis of

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experience acquired during that first year. In that connection, she supported the idea that standing committees were no longer necessary and that temporary working groups or special committees could be established on specific issues.

58. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) said that if the two committees were abolished and the suggestion of devoting one regular session to programme matters and another to administrative and financial issues were adopted for the current year, the Board might run into some difficulties since decisions on a number of issues were still pending. As the Russian representative had suggested, the Board could adopt a flexible approach during the current year as to how it addressed urgent issues. The format suggested by Brazil could be implemented in subsequent years.

59. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that in paragraph 22, General Assembly resolution 48/162 established the functions of executive boards within the Economic and Social Council. It was essential, however, to determine the division of labour among the various boards; that question should be discussed at the Council's upcoming session. He agreed that new committees should be established on an "as needed" basis, and that any permanent decision should be based on experience garnered during the current year. Furthermore, the rules of procedure should use flexible and comprehensive wording so as to allow for broad freedom of action.

60. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said he agreed that the committees should be abolished. The needs of the Board with regard to committees should not, however, be prejudged; flexibility would be required during the transitional year.

61. Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland) said that he endorsed the views of China and the United States. The Board should now focus its attention on exploring new and more efficient working methods. He pointed out that it would not be useful to form committees on an ad hoc basis over the long term; a more permanent structure should be developed at the end of the current year.

62. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that instead of allocating budgetary issues to one yearly session and programme issues to the other, the work of the two former committees might be combined into one ad hoc organ to deal with issues as they arose. Additional organs might be needed to handle the workload.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that there seemed to be general agreement that the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance should be abolished, and that flexibility would be required in developing a new procedure. Discussion on that system would be resumed under the item relating to the rules of procedure.

64. She invited the Board to turn to the question of the role and composition of the Bureau.

65. Miss ARIAS (Colombia) said that the Bureau should be composed of five elected members - the Chairman and four Vice-Chairmen. With the reduced size and more frequent meeting schedule of the Board, the new Bureau should serve as a bridge between Board and secretariat; it should not be empowered to make decisions but should be administrative in function.

66. Mr. TISSOT (United Kingdom) agreed with the Colombian suggestion with regard to the size and role of the new Bureau. In his view, its role should be not consultative but administrative, to complement the new role of the Board.

67. Mr. NEUMANN (Germany) said that he too favoured a five-member Bureau with a limited role. That body should not be allowed to function as a governing structure between regular Board sessions. Committees, if established, should be limited to three members and should be chaired by one of the Bureau's vice-chairmen.

68. Mr. HJELMAKER (Sweden) agreed that the Bureau should be composed of five members and that its role should be purely administrative; any close dialogue between member States and the secretariat should occur at meetings of the Board.

69. Mrs. SINGH (India) said that her delegation also supported the establishment of a five-member Bureau to serve as a bridge between member States and the secretariat, for administrative functions only.

70. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said that he agreed with previous speakers on the composition and role of the Bureau; the decisions of UNICEF must be made by the member States themselves within the context of meetings of the Board.

71. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that, in his view, the composition of the Bureau should reflect the geographical distribution of the membership of the Board.

72. Mr. SUTOYO (Indonesia) said that his delegation supported the views of Colombia, the United Kingdom and Germany with regard to the Bureau's role. He wished to remind the Committee that the two major thrusts of General Assembly resolution 48/162 were the restructuring and revitalization of the Organization. He did not share the view that the Bureau should serve as a bridge between member States and the secretariat. It should be confined to facilitating the work of the Board, and have an administrative but not decision-making function.

73. Mr. POST (Netherlands) said that the dialogue between the secretariat and the Board was of prime importance and should take place within the meetings of the Board; the Bureau should not serve as an additional bureaucratic layer in that process. In practice, however, the secretariat would have questions to raise, and Bureau members could serve as conduits for the transmittal of information to members of the regional groups they represented. He suggested that, with the reduced role of the Bureau, the secretariat's participation in its meetings should be limited to that of the Executive Director or his representative.

74. Mr. CHRISTENSEN (Denmark) said that his delegation shared the views of Germany. Furthermore, it agreed with the Netherlands that the secretariat's presence at Bureau meetings should be limited. Lastly, he subscribed to the growing consensus that the Bureau should serve as a liaison.

75. Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland), while sharing the views of the Netherlands and Denmark, cautioned that the Bureau's administrative function should not be restrictively defined.

76. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said his delegation acknowledged that UNICEF was making a transition to a more cost-effective form of governance; flexibility was of course essential during that process. He agreed with other speakers that the Bureau should be composed of five members and have a liaison function; he stressed, however, that it should serve the Board as necessary, and therefore its working methods should not be firmly defined at the moment. He also felt that the Bureau should be permitted to determine its own procedures. Lastly, members of the Bureau should perhaps engage in a division of labour, one member taking responsibility for programme issues, for example, another for administration and finance.

77. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) said that the Bureau should coordinate the flow of information to the Board.

78. The CHAIRMAN said there seemed to be general agreement that the Bureau should be composed of five members and should function as a bridge or liaison between the secretariat and the Board, in a strictly administrative capacity. Furthermore, Bureau members should serve as chairmen of other bodies that might be formed to deal with financial and programme issues, and the participation of the secretariat in Bureau meetings should be limited.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.